REMARKS BY DR. EDWARD HODNETT OF OHIO UNIVERSITY
TO THE OBJECTIVES COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND CO-CHAIRMEN
THURSDAY DECEMBER 29, 1955, at Midland

Four facts underlie what might be called the crisis in modern higher education.

1. Three million more babies are born each year than the year before.

2. Great technological changes are taking place in industry. They demand new skills and more specialized training. They also produce social problems that require more wisdom to solve.

3. Our standard of living becomes higher every year. The average citizen has more leisure and more opportunities to use higher education.

4. This provides time for greater participation by the individual citizen in the affairs of his community, his nation, and the world. In America we are moving toward the ideal of democracy, in which the individual citizen has the maximum freedom, the maximum opportunities, and the maximum responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the whole of society.

The increased birth rate during and after World War II now directly affects every college in the country. In a few years authorities expect the college population to double. The Office of Education in Washington estimates an increase of one million students in the next ten years. What is happening already is that many of the colleges of high standing are now becoming even more difficult to enter, and many others, particularly the tax supported institutions, are already becoming over-crowded.

The price of over-crowding is mediocrity. If there are too many students for the facilities and for the number and competence of teachers, the students receive a second-rate education. In the light of the world situation, America cannot afford second-rate education-any more than it can afford second-rate armed forces.

This problem of over-crowding in the colleges raises an issue that needs clarification. Too many people have talked about the issue as though it were an either-or proposition -- a choice between either the democratic ideal of education for all our youth, or education only for the elite. Fortunately, the thinking of the Tri-County College committees shows that this fallacy does not exist here. The real question is how best to educate all of our young people according to their abilities and according to the needs of society.

According to this thoroughly American philosophy, it is quite as important to educate a nurse or homemaker or teacher <u>well</u> as it is to educate a chemist or doctor well. In order to carry out such a program, inevitably there must be careful matching of the abilities of the individual student and the kind of study he follows.

It is no more undemocratic or unkind to say to a boy, "Bill, you have a much better chance of success following a two-year program leading to work as an engineer's assistant than you have in a four-year program leading to a degree in chemical engineering" than it is for a football coach to say, "Bill, you're too light to play varsity football, but you're pretty fast. Why don't you try out for the track team?"

Now to get down specifically to the Tri-County College project. First of all I should like to compliment the community--the citizens in these three counties who have so ably and unselfishly and far-sightedly participated in this cooperative planning enterprise. It is a thrilling example of how Americans do work together in a free society. It is thrilling, but it is also inevitable.

What's happening here in northeast Michigan has to happen, and it has to happen all over the United States. The existing institutions will simply not be able to handle the higher education needs of the future. Therefore every community in the country that has needs commensurate with those of these three counties and that does not have existing facilities, will have to get on the job as Bay City, Midland, and Saginaw have, and figure out the answers before America suffers the ill effects of having a number of generations of boys and girls subjected to what has been called an educational depression.

Several aspects of your effort seem to me notable, and I wish I could do something more than mention them.

First of all, it is a democratic effort, in which individual citizens and representatives of diverse groupd have participated equally and harmoniously. For example, I am particularly delighted to see how deeply commited your representatives of industry are, not because of their concern for their companies but because of their concern for their community.

I am impressed by the business-like way -- I suppose I might say the scientific way -- in which your various committees are going about getting their facts and their ideas straight. As a result you will have an institution tailor-made to the needs of your three counties.

I think there is much wisdom in the four-part design that seems to be emerging. In order to make a living and to prepare themselves for happier living, more and more boys and girls are in need of formal education beyond senior high school, and for many of them the two-year college with its combination of general education and specialized training in what might be called semi-professional skills such as drafting and secretarial work, fills the bill. For others, with different interests and capacities, the four-year liberal arts college with its balance of science, social science, and humanities, provides a rounded and thoroughly practical preparation. For those who desire more specialized training, the

four years of liberal arts, or part of them, are an inescapable prerequisite.

Then you have not forgotten continuing education. Many fine boys and girls must go from high school to jobs and, the many cannot evade marriage long enough to get a college degree. They need college-level courses. And even degree-holders need instruction in special fields. Then in your multiple approach to this college you are doing something splendid in planning that it be a center for art and music and drama and all similar cultural activities of the three counties that go to make this area a delightful place to live.

This planning seems to me distinctive enough in itself to merit national attention, for I think what you do here in northeast Michigan may well set a pattern for communities throughout the country. I realize that your committees still have much work ahead and that nothing is fixed or final yet. But as long as you hold steadfastly to one feature of your planning, I am sure that you will be successful beyond your expectation - that is your insistence on an institution of high excellence.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this simple concept of high excellence. Whoever coined the phrase "think big" did not mean, I think, that you should have a grandiose plan. We already have many, many institutions that are too large to provide the best in education for the individual student. We have too few institutions that are activated by a large vision - the vision of intellectual excellence, of excellence in teaching, of excellence in their values and behavior of their students, of excellence in their relation to the affairs of their communities.

As long as you insist on it, you can have an institution of the highest quality right here in the Saginaw Valley. It won't cost you any more than an undistinguished one. All it takes is clear-headedness, courage, co-operation, and vision - and you seem to have plenty of what it takes.